Is metatron a converted christian?

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For my חברותא, Elliot R. Wolfson נר"י

Résumé

Dans cet article, je souhaite proposer une troisième voie de compréhension des racines et des chemins du binitarisme dans l'Antiquité tardive, y compris parmi les rabbins et dans la littérature rabbinique. Au lieu d'une vue extrême qui pose une continuité ininterrompue entre l'apocalyptique du second Temple et la littérature des Heikhalot*, ou autre, récemment articulée par Peter Schäfer, selon laquelle la spéculation binitaire sur* Métatron *est entièrement le fruit d'une réponse au christianisme, je propose une troisième voie, à savoir qu'on a la preuve presque irréfutable d'échanges croisés entre les cercles chrétiens et juifs dans l'Antiquité tardive. Mais il existe aussi de bons indices que de telles traditions ont circulé parmi les Juifs, pendant la période rabbinique, indépendamment de tels contacts. Nous pourrions imaginer le développement de ces motifs dans la littérature des* Heikhalot *(et le Talmud) à travers un processus de « bricolage » déployé et redéployé dans différents contextes historiques particuliers.*

Summary

In this article, I wish to propose a third way of thinking about the roots and routes of Jewish binitarianism in Late Antiquity, including among the Rabbis and in rabbinic literature. Instead of one extreme view that posits lines of unbroken continuity between Second Temple apocalyptic and Hekhalot *literature, or another, recently articulated one by Peter Schäfer, according to whom binitarian speculation about* Metatron *is entirely the product of a response to Christianity, I propose a third way, to wit that while there is nearly incontrovertible*

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evidence for the interchange of Christian and Jewish circles in Late Antiquity, some of which I offer here, there is also good evidence for the circulation of such traditions among Jews through the rabbinic period independently of such contacts. We should imagine the development of these motifs in the Hekhalot *literature (and the Talmud) via a process of "bricolage" deployed and redeployed in different particular historical contexts.*

Increasingly over the last two decades, scholars have been noting and taking seriously the similarity between certain representations of the divine realm in texts that we call Jewish and in texts that we call Christian. This, to use a crude shorthand, involves an implication that there are two divine sovereignties "in heaven" sharing, in some sense or other, power or sovereignty. After the 3rd century CE or so, this ancient set of Jewish beliefs was to be named by the Rabbis, the "heresy" of "Two Sovereignties in Heaven." While, on the one hand, these representations of the divine, neither in their non-Christian nor in their Christian forms, do not violate Second Temple notions of "monotheism," which always allowed for subordinate divinities (that מלאך ה' who appears all over the Torah ambiguously identified or not with THE LORD himself), the rabbinic movement can, to a certain extent, be understood as a theological reform movement that seeks to "purify" Jewish thinking of the notion that there are "two sovereignties in heaven." That which we habitually take, therefore, as the single most salient difference between an essentialized Judaism and an equally essentialized Christianity, turns out to be the product of inner Jewish struggle, rather than an originary difference.[1] This perspective, having been offered by me in a series of publications, needs defense now in the light of Peter Schäfer's recent concerted total rejection of it.

For this picture, Schäfer substitutes an originary difference between "Judaism" and "Christianity" on this issue with the observed similarities developing only at the end of Late Antiquity in the Bavli and its environment under the influence of Christianity

1. This was, moreover, a failed struggle. Powerful traces of Jewish binitarianism persisted throughout Late Antiquity, especially in piyyut, and were ultimately important contributors to theosophic Kabbalah. E.R. Wolfson, "The Image of Jacob Engraved Upon the Throne: Further Reflection on the Esoteric Doctrine of the German Pietists," in *Along the Path: Studies in Kabbalistic Myth, Symbolism, and Hermeneutics* (Albany [New York], 1995) 1-62.

and in response to that. His view is part and parcel of his position explicitly stated elsewhere that much of the energy of the Babylonian Rabbis was devoted to a war to the death between Judaism and Christianity in which all means, fair and foul, might be employed.[2] There is thus much at stake in this debate. In order to make it clear that I do not deny the possibility or reality of such contacts between Babylonian Amoraim and Christians, I am going to present first the case for a very strong and rich connection of that sort. Following this, however, I will revisit some of the earlier arguments for independent rabbinic transmission of certain topoi regarding the nature of the Messiah, evidence that does not suggest latter day Christian influence on the Babylonian Rabbis but instead continuity between Second Temple apocalyptic and the Talmud. I begin, however, with an example that *does* in my view conform to Schäfer's model.

1. Crossing Borders: On the Treasury of Souls

Late Ancient Babylonian Jewry was at a meeting point of empires and cultures from West and East. The most powerful of those cultural connections to the West was, to be sure, to the Jews of Greco-Roman Palestine, their scholars and traditions. But this primary connection hardly exhausts the Talmud's cultural world. While a great deal of attention has been paid in recent years to the Iranian connections of the Bavli,[3] considerably less has been given to contacts with Christians. The geographical center of authority for the Babylonian Jews is in Maḥoza (Syriac Maḥoze, a section of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the Sasanian capitol), the site of the Catholicos of the East Syrian church. As Adam Becker has put the point:

> Jews and Christians in Mesopotamia spoke the same language, lived under the same rulers, practiced the same magic, engaged in mystical and eschatological speculation, and shared scriptures as well as a similar fixation on the ongoing and eternal relevance of those scriptures. They developed similar institutions aimed at inculcating an identity in young males that defined each of them as essentially a

2. P. Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton [New Jersey], 2007); D. Boyarin, "Nostalgia for Christianity: Getting Medieval Again," *Religion & Literature* 42 (2010) 49-76.

3. See now S. Secunda, *The Iranian Talmud* (Philadelphia [Pennsylvania], 2013), forthcoming, incorporating full bibliography of, inter alia, the important work of his teacher, Prof. Y. Elman, as well as of others in the field.

> homo discens, a learning human, or rather, a res discens, a learning entity, since learning was understood as an essential characteristic of their humanity."[4]

Given these considerations, Becker adumbrates the importance of this shared culture for the formation and content of the Babylonian Talmud.[5] Whatever the precise lines and modes of contact between Aramaic and Greek, between Jews in the Sassanian realms and Christians in Cappadocia, there is at least one piece of evidence for the product of such contact that I take as decisive.

In his excellent monograph on Eunomius, a late 4th century "neo-Arian" theologian, Richard Vaggione discusses an important point of theological resonance for his hero, having to do with the nature of human souls, a point that has powerful implications for any theology of the Incarnation. The eponymous hero of Vaggione's book holds what appears to be a very strange and ostensibly unique doctrine. All human souls were created at the time of the first creation of humanity itself, when Adam came into being. There are, accordingly a pre-established and finite number of souls. The condition for the end of the world is that all the pre-created souls

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4. A.H. Becker, *The Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia [Pennsylvania], 2006) 5.

5. I have removed what appeared in earlier versions of this argument as speculation on the possible lines of contact between the Greek West and the Aramaic East in response to the correct strictures of A.H. Becker, "Positing a 'Cultural Relationship' Between Plato and the Babylonian Talmud," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 101 (2011) 255-69. Becker partly mistakes me, however, as claiming that actual texts of Plato had reached Sassanian realms which was never my point but rather that certain aspects of Platonic-inspired textual culture had spread there through the medium of late-ancient literature in the broad Platonic tradition, and even that, much weaker, claim may not be supportable. In general, while much of Becker's critique of some of my arguments is telling, he misapprehends two things: first of all, my considerations of the possibility of cultural contact between Babylonia and Hellenistic traditions were presented tentatively (and, as such, I welcome entirely his critique); secondly, they were much more fluid than he reads me as claiming. Thus, I certainly do not think/never thought that the Rabbis had read Lucian, but rather that there is evidence for some common tradition between these two bodies of literature, such that comparison of them with each other was more than merely typological, if, as I see now, less than easily accounted for historically. The evidence presented in the first part of this paper goes a long way, however, in establishing the reality of connections between the Babylonian Rabbis and Greek Christian writers of Cappadocia, whatever their explanation.

will have lived a life in bodies. Fascinatingly, the "paradigm" of the creative act by which God created the souls is the infusion of breath into Adam's body. So far Vaggione's interpretation.[6] Piecing the doctrine together from the various sources cited by Vaggione,[7] I would take the analysis (synthesis) a bit further. A hostile witness to the Eunomian doctrine, Nemesius of Emessa presents its foundation in the following manner:

> Eunomius, then, defined the soul as a bodiless essence created in a body [agreeing with Plato and Aristotle]. For, on the one hand, the "bodiless essence" came from the "truth" [Plato], on the other hand, the "created in a body" is learned from Aristotle. He did not see, despite being clever, that what he was trying to bring together was incompatible.[8]

Vaggione himself remarks "that there is no need to try to 'unpack' Nemesius' criticism here or go into the background of the doctrine." For my purposes, however, at least a partial unpacking and going into the background is the essence of what is needed, for Eunomius's doctrine is fully explicable and Nemesius's objection answerable when comparison is made to an important rabbinic holding. Moreover, as we shall see, the Talmudic saying is illuminated by the comparison to Eunomius as well.

At four places in the Babylonian Talmud (*Yevamot* 62*a*; 63*b*; *Avoda Zara* 5*a*; *Nidda* 13*b* and only in the Babylonian Talmud), we find the following somewhat puzzling statement:

> Rabbi Assi said: The son of David will not come until all of the souls in the body are finished, as it says 'For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit shall fail before me and the souls that I have made (Isaiah 57:16).

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6. R.P. VAGGIONE, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford-New York, 2000) 119-120.

7. Any analysis I can provide here is owing to Vaggione's erudition and to the diligence of my research assistant, Ruth Haber who tracked down and provided for me copies of every one of the many sources that Vaggione cites; perusal of his footnotes will show that both (erudition and diligence) are formidable.

8. Nemesius, M. MORANI, ed., *Nemesii Emeseni De Natura Hominis* (Leipzig, 1987) 30. For "the Truth" as a name for Platonism, see Plotinus, *Ennead* II 9, 6. 10-12. This term is being used as late as the 15th century among Jews as well. Cf. Nemesius, *On the Nature of Man*, trans. with an introduction and notes by R.W. Sharples and P.J. van der Eijk (Liverpool, 2008) 69.

Rabbi Assi's midrash reads the verse to mean only when the spirit and the souls that God has made run out, as it were, before him, will the Messiah come. When the spirit and the souls "fail before me," when they are gone and finished, then, says Rabbi Assi, God will not contend or be wroth, for the redemption will have come. In other words, we find here in a midrashic word the entire content of Eunomius's controversial doctrine that there is a finite number of human souls from the beginning and that the redemption will only come when all of them have been born into bodies. This is not to deny Vaggione's elaborate reconstruction of the philosophical theology underlying Eunomius's position but to elaborate its homelier sources in traditional biblical interpretation common to some Jews and Christians, although, to be sure, Eunomius does not cite any biblical sources for this view. Although some antecedents to part of this doctrine, namely the theologumenon that all the precreated souls need to be used up before the redemption can be found in the apocalyptic literature, the late ancient forms of the tradition share details not found before.[9] I find it entirely plausible to imagine this doctrine (rather rare in the Talmud itself, as we have seen) circulating between and among Babylonian Jews and Cappadocian Christians in the 4th century. Lest the connection seem too far-fetched, let me remark that the Talmud itself knows of many connections between its rabbinic heroes and Cappadocia; according to Babylonian legend none less than Rabbis Akiva and Me'ir found themselves in Cappadocia on occasion. No wonder, then, that one Christian author, so-called Pseudo-Athanasius, regards at least some elements of this doctrine as "secundum fabulatores Judaeos," and, *pace* Vaggione, these fabulatores would hardly be Philo, who would never be referred to in such dismissive terms by patristic writers.[10]

There is further evidence for a rabbinic provenience for this theologumenon/interpretation, pointed out by Vaggione but, in my humble opinion, not fully appreciated by him. In the *Clementine Recognitions* 3.26, we find the doctrine as well:

> And on this account the world required long periods, until the number of souls which were predestined to fill it should be com-

9. H. Sysling, *Teḥiyyat Ha-Metim: The Resurrection of the Dead in the Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch and Parallel Traditions in Classical Rabbinic Literature* (Tübingen, 1996) 194, who points out as well the signal differences between the rabbinic and the apocalyptic versions of the idea.

10. R.P. Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford-New York, 2000) 119, n. 255.

> pleted, and then that visible heaven should be folded up like a scroll, and that which is higher should appear, and the souls of the blessed, being restored to their bodies, should be ushered into light.[11]

Vaggione implies that this is, perhaps, an Anomoean interpolation in the pseudo-Clementine text, remarking that this is "a work with at least one substantial Anomoean interpolation."[12] When we consider, however, the well-established connections between the authors of the pseudo-Clementina and other Jews,[13] and even rabbinic Jews, a much more attractive hypothesis emerges through which the *Recognitions* may have been the source for Eunomius, rather than the opposite, or at any rate that the *Recognitions* provide precious evidence for the circulation of this idea, *secundum fabulatores Judaeos*, indeed, in 4th century Christian circles. Further support for this point may be adduced from the image of the heavens folded like a scroll, one that appears prominently in rabbinic texts as well. The very fact that the putatively "orthodox" writer of the Pseudo-Athanasian text also knows the tradition and its provenance is Jewish suggests too that knowledge of this doctrine was widespread in early Christian circles.

While I thus agree with Pseudo-Athanasius, on fairly plausible chronological grounds, that it is not unlikely that this doctrine has come to Eunomius following Jewish aggadists (*fabulatores*), Eunomius, in turn, helps us unravel a puzzle in the rabbinic text as well. While the medieval Jewish commentators (chiefly Rashi) certainly understand that "in the body" here is a reference to a mystical doctrine of a treasury of souls, they seem unable to explain why it is called "in the body." The scholar of rabbinic ideas, E.E. Urbach held that the "body" here referred to the individual bodies into which the souls would be born,[14] an opinion rightly rejected by Sysling out of hand.[15] Sysling himself, however, is no

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11. Clement of Rome, "Recognitions of Clement," in *The Writings of Tatian and Theophilus, and, the Clementine Recognitions* (Edinburgh, 1867) 121.

12. R.P. Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford-New York, 2000) 120, n. 257.

13. A.I. Baumgarten, "Literary Evidence for Jewish Christianity in the Galilee," in L.I. Levine, ed., *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (New York, 1992) 39-50.

14. E.E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem, 1975) 237.

15. H. Sysling, *Tehiyyat Ha-Metim: The Resurrection of the Dead in the Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch and Parallel Traditions in Classical Rabbinic Literature* (Tübingen, 1996) 207.

more able to explain the use of the term "body" here than is Rashi himself. Eunomius's connection, however, between this doctrine and the breathing of God's spirit into Adam, solves this exegetical conundrum nicely. The "body" here is the body of the supernal Adam and what was breathed into that body was all of the souls that would ever exist, all created at that moment, precisely as Eunomius would have it.[16]

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16. There are, to the best of my knowledge, no rabbinic antecedents or parallels to this view found, as I have said, only in the Bavli. Midrash Tanḥuma claims that "all of the souls that there were from Primal Adam and that there will be until the end of the whole world were created in the Hexameron and they are all in the Garden of Eden," but this view precisely contradicts the notion that they are all incorporated into Adam's body. His is only one of the souls created during the Six Days and stored up in Paradise. The Tanḥuma a bit further on gives the following (which I am quoting in the Hebrew) as it has been mistranslated previously in my view:

מיד רומז הקדוש ברוך הוא למלאך הממונה על הרוחות ואומר לו הבא לי רוח פלוני שהיא בג"ע =בגן עדן= ששמו פלוני ותארו כך וכך לפי שכל הרוחות שעתידין להב־ ראות כולן הן נבראות מיום שברא העולם עד שיכלה כל העולם הם מזומנין בבני אדם דכתיב (קהלת ו) מה שהיה כבר נקרא שמו, מיד הולך המלאך ומביא את הרוח לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא

> [When a man is about to have sex with his wife] immediately the Holy, Blessed One indicates to the angel who is in charge of souls, and says to him: "Bring me a certain soul which is in Paradise, whose name is such and such and whose characteristics are such and such," since all the souls that will be created all of them have been created from when he created the world until the world will end. They are ready to be in humans, as it says, "Whatever exists has already been called by name (Eccl. 6:10)" Immediately the angel goes and brings that soul before the Holy, Blessed One. (Tanhuma Piqude 3)

Pace Ginzberg (L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, trans. H. Szold (Philadelphia [Pennsylvania, 1909-1938] 5, 75, n. 19), this text says nothing at all about a single soul that incorporates all others, only that all the souls that there ever will be exist in Paradise from the creation and already have names and particular character traits, and that when a human conception is about to occur, God chooses the particular soul that will be embodied (not without protest on the soul's part) in that particular act. Furthermore, Ginzberg seems to me incorrect in finding traces of this idea in 1 Cor. 15:22 and Rom. 5:14. Tertullian, *De Anima*, 40 also, by saying "Every soul, then, by reason of its birth, has its nature in Adam until it is born again in Christ" can hardly be referring to this mythologem either.

As I am instructed by Elliot Wolfson, the earliest place in rabbinic literature (broadly speaking) in which we find this idea articulated, and as an interpretation of our passage in the Bavli, is in the Book Bahir, where we can read: "The Son of David will not come until all the souls that are in the body are finished. All the souls that are in the body of Adam... (D. Abrams, ed., *Book*

Perhaps it is not going too far to suggest that Nemesius has (wilfully?) misread Eunomius as well, and that Eunomius's reference to the soul as being "created in a body" [ἐν σώματι κτιζομένην] should be read rather "in the body" referring to the Adamic body as well and there is no self-contradiction between "the truth" and Aristotelianism in Eunomius either. The remarkable thing remains, in any case, that we have what is to my mind compelling evidence here of cultural and religious connection of a deep, specific, and recognized sort between the Christian world of 5th century Cappadocia and the Babylonian Rabbinic world to the East and South and over the *limes* of the Roman Empire.[17]

2. How Much Christianity in Jewish Babylonia?

At the same time that we are seeing Christian culture as an important part of the text-scape[18] of the Babylonian Talmud, we must also be judicious in assessing the limits of such speculation. There are also, I contend, crossing points between the ideas expressed in the Babylonian Talmud and Christian concepts that are not the product of latter day contact but of survival from earlier commonly shared motifs, most notably in ideas that are drawn from a common source in Second Temple apocalyptic literature. This is the point that Peter Schäfer directly denies in his recent work,[19] so, of necessity, I will have to enter into some disputatious interactions, but there is enough at stake, I reckon, to make that worthwhile. Although I have treated these texts before, I am revisiting them here, taking on board what seems to me correct in Schäfer's strictures but defending also with new argumentation the claim that there is a historical link between Second Temple apocalyptic

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Bahir [Los Angeles, 1994] sec. 26) Wolfson remarks to me (in a personal communication) that the critical word "Adam" only appears as a marginal addition in the oldest manuscript of the text (and not at all in later ones). At the very least, however, we could say that the earliest attestation of such an interpretation of the Talmud as I am offering here can be found in the glossator to Bahir and thus must have been extant then.

17. A.H. Becker, "Beyond the Spatial and Temporal *Limes*: Questioning the 'Parting of the Ways' Outside the Roman Empire," in A.H. Becker and A. Yoshiko Reed, ed., *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen, 2003) 373-392.

18. For this term, see S. Secunda, *The Iranian Talmud* (Philadelphia [Pennsylvania], 2013), forthcoming.

19. P. Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* (Princeton [New Jersey], 2012).

and "incarnational" Messialogy among late-ancient Jewry, including rabbinic Jewry.

I will begin, as is my wont, with a text from the Talmud.

3. Reading Daniel in the Bavli

In *Ḥagiga* 14*a*, we read:

> One verse (Daniel 7:9) says "his garment was like white snow and the hair of his head like the wool of sheep" and one verse says (Song of Songs 5:11), "his hair is curls as black as a raven." This is no difficulty: One is in court [lit. sitting] and the other is at war. For the master has said: There is no one more appropriate for judgment than an elder, and there is no one more appropriate for war than a youth.
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> One verse says (Daniel 7:9): "His *throne* was flames of fire," and one verse says "Until *thrones* were set up and one ancient of days sat (7:9)."[20] This is no difficulty; one was for him and one for David.[21] As we have learned in a *baraita*: One for him and one for David, the words of Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Yose The Galilean said to him: Akiva! How long will you make the Divine Presence (Shekina) profane. [Rather] One for judgment and one for mercy.[22]
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> Did he [Rabbi Akiva] accept if from him [Rabbi Yose] or did he not accept it from him? Come and hear: One for judgment and one for mercy, the words of Rabbi Akiva. Said to him Rabbi Ele'azar ben Azariah: Akiva! What are you doing with Haggada? Desist from your words and go back to laws of purity and impurity [lit. skin diseases and tent impurities]. Rather: One for the throne and one for the footstool. The throne to sit upon; the footstool to rest his

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20. This is within the same verse there is a contradiction in the number of thrones.

21. For David the Messiah on the second throne, see E.R. Wolfson, "*Yerida la-Merkava*: Typology of Ecstasy and Enthronement in Ancient Jewish Mysticism," in R.A. Herrera, ed., *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typologies* (New York, 1993) 39, n. 77.

22. As Wolfson has precisely read this, the stark anthropomorphism of the biblical theophanies, according to the midrashic reading, both in the core tradition and in the later accretions, is treated in light of the manifestation of God's attributes of justice and mercy. The anthropomorphism and visionary elements are thus subsumed under the normative categories of ethical behavior as applied to God. E.R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Literature* (Princeton [New Jersey], 1994) 34.

feet, as it says (Isaiah 66:1) "The heaven is my throne and the earth my footstool."[23]

In this text, we find thematized the apparent contradiction between God being portrayed as a Wise Elder and being portrayed as a youth full of vigor and passion. Two different contradictions are cited. The second one, which is the one that concerns us here, is — quite explicitly — the contradiction between the notion of One God and the representation — so it seems — in Daniel of two divine figures, the second the One Like a Son of Man who is seated on a second throne. Daniel 7:13, the crucial (but dangerous) proof text is portentously not cited explicitly but only obliquely through the reference to כורסוון, thrones in the plural.

The tanna'im cited in the Bavli both read Daniel 7 in the same way: The second throne is for a second divine figure (the Shekina) whom Rabbi Akiva identifies as David. We have, here then, both binitarianism and an incarnation, which latter raises Rabbi Yose's dander. It is highly unlikely, *pace* Alan Segal (cautiously), that we are dealing here with a "genuine" tradition about Rabbi Akiva from early in the second century, this on general methodological grounds. There may be some indication, however, that the *baraita* was not, at any rate, produced for this context, and may even be, therefore, a Palestinian source. It can be seen that it does not quite fit its context, since the anonymous voice in the Talmud (the *stamma*) actually asserts the position ("Rabbi Akiva's") that the *baraita* appears to reject, so that there is a disconnection between the stamma's quotation of Rabbi Akiva as support for its view and then, seemingly, noting that he abandoned it. This at least suggests the possibility that the *baraita* is an earlier, and thus possibly Palestinian, source.[24]

Let me elaborate my reading of the passage. Although, as I have suggested, the text (and other rabbinic texts) carefully, gingerly avoids actually citing the Son of Man passage in these very verses, it is on these verses that they indeed rely. The portrayed Rabbi Akiva's point is that one of the two thrones (as per his tradition of reading) was for the Ancient of Days and one for David, thus the Son of Man. The crux is his identification of David, the Messiah, as the "Son of Man" who sits at God's right hand, thus suggesting not only a divine figure but one who is incarnate in a human being as

23. All translations in this paper mine unless otherwise indicated.

24. I owe this point to Ishay Rosen-Zvi.

well[25] — "Are you the Messiah? I am and you shall see 'the son of man' sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62). Hence, his objector's taunt: "Until when will you make the Divine Presence profane?", that is, imply that the Son of Man has become incarnated in the human figure of the Davidic Messiah, or, perhaps, that the human David has been divinized through his presence on the second throne.[26] Either way, Rabbi Akiva seems to be projecting a divine-human, Son of Man, who will be the Messiah. His contemporary R. Yose the Galilean strenuously objects to Rabbi Akiva's "dangerous" interpretation and gives the verse a "Modalist" interpretation. While I think a certain degree of caution is in order — this reading is not, shall we say, entirely provable —, notwithstanding it seems the most plausible and compelling way to understand this text.

On this reading, interpretation of "Rabbi Akiva" grows out of precisely the same kind of conflation of Messiah, Son of David with the Redeeming, divine Son of Man of Daniel 7 that we find in Mark, producing similar Christological results. Supporting this interpretation (at least in the Babylonian Talmud; perhaps stemming from earlier Palestinian usages) we read the following passage in *Sanhedrin* 98*a*:

אמר רבי אלכסנדרי: רבי יהושע בן לוי רמי, כתיב +דניאל ז'+ וארו עם ענני שמיא כבר אנש אתה, וכתב +זכריה ט'+ עני ורכב על חמור! - זכו - עם ענני שמיא, לא זכו - עני ורוכב על חמור.

Rabbi Alexandri said: Rabbi Yehoshua the son of Levi raised a contradiction: It is written (Daniel 7:13) and behold with the clouds of

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25. A.F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden, 1977) 47.

26. For precisely this combination, see 4 Ezra 12:32 in which it is insisted that the heavenly "Son of Man" comes from the posterity of David, "even though it is not apparent why a descendant of David should come on the clouds" (A. Yarbro Collins and J.J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* [Grand Rapids (Michigan), 2008] 207). For enthronement as divinization in near-contemporary (with the Talmud) Merkava texts, see "we find the additional element that the *yeridah* results in the mystic being seated alongside or facing the throne of glory. Occupying this seat represents a process of enthronement which signals has become a full-fledged member of the throne-world, attaining the rank of the highest angel." E.R. Wolfson, "*Yerida la-Merkava*: Typology of Ecstasy and Enthronement in Ancient Jewish Mysticism," in R.A. Herrera, ed., *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typologies* (New York, 1993) 15.

> heaven there came one like a human being, [a Son of Man] and it is written (Zechariah 9:9) poor and riding on a donkey! If they are righteous, with the clouds of heaven; if they are not righteous, poor and riding on a donkey.

Obviously the Talmud does not speak of two Messiahs here; it is hard to imagine anyone claiming they did[27] — notwithstanding the fact, of course, that there are two Messiahs according to the latter-day Rabbis, Ben Yosef and Ben David. But it is clear that Daniel 7 had been given a messianic reading and that there was tension felt between the Messiah of Daniel 7 and the Messiah of Zechariah 9, between the Messiah as a divine figure and the Messiah as a humiliated human being, expressed in good rabbinic fashion as a contradiction between verses resolved in a totally topical fashion in the text.[28] The tension and the potential it bears for an incarnational reading is nonetheless there. It is this tension, I think, that motivates the controversy between the figures of Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yose in the *Ḥagiga* text as well. Of course, the Talmud itself must record that Rabbi Akiva changed his mind in order for him to remain "orthodox." The Son of Man, also know as "Two Sovereignties in Heaven," is thus not foreign even at the very heart of the rabbinic enterprise. Even a figure like Rabbi Akiva has to be "educated" as to the heretical nature of his position, suggesting once again that any absolute difference between mystical circles that embrace such theological notions and rabbinic circles that have always, as it were, rejected such malignant influence, has to be withdrawn once and

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27. *Pace* D.R.A. Hare, *The Son of Man Tradition* (Minneapolis [Minnesota], 1990) 19, who quotes the passage quite out of its own context as a midrash on the two verses on the way to his misleading conclusion that "Rabbi Joshua was discussing the timing of the Messiah's advent, not his nature."

28. Directly *contra* M. Casey, *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London, 1979) 87. Of course, the rabbinic tradition insisted on a corporate interpretation of the Son of Man (M. Casey, *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* [London, 1979] 80–84); the point here is *not* that Rabbi Akiva represents the dominant and accepted rabbinic tradition but that he represents some sort of dissident or underground counter tradition (and remember this may have little to do, in any case, with the "historical" Rabbi Akiva) which is being explicitly discredited in this text in favor of the developing standard rabbinic theology and reading. This point has similarly been misunderstood by D.R.A. Hare, *The Son of Man Tradition* (Minneapolis [Minnesota], 1990) 18.

for all.[29] This is what the editors of the Talmud would want us to believe, but a different reality is easy to perceive behind their very efforts to convince. Rabbinic Judaism, qua orthodoxy, is formed precisely out of the rejection of ideas about the godhead that were once widely held in Jewry, and that rejection is dramatized in our text of Rabbi Akiva's re-education.

Schäfer more or less accepts and agrees with my reading of the Talmud here. We differ with respect to the textual background to the Talmudic text. For Schäfer, it is to be explained as a late-ancient Babylonian response to Christianity. In my view, *pace* Schäfer, however, there is a very important, somewhat earlier Palestinian parallel to our Babylonian *baraita* in the mid-3rd century midrash,[30] the Mekhilta on Exodus, as well as other evidence that will lead us to conclude that the ideas expressed by "Rabbi Akiva," as well as by the Bavli's stamma, belong to a complex of ideas current among late-ancient Jews and going back to the literature of the Second Temple, especially to the Enoch literature.

4. Reading Daniel in the Mekhilta

Key to Peter Schäfer's argument that the Babylonian Talmud manifests a robust, even belligerent latter-day response to Christianity is an attempt on his part to demonstrate that earlier Palestinian rabbinic texts do not engage at all with the problem of the apparent presence of two divine beings (or two persons of God if you prefer) in Daniel 7. Denying this engagement is what empowers Schäfer's claim that it is only in very late-ancient (or even Byzantine-era) Babylonia that Jews entertained such ideas and then only under the impact and in imitation of Christianity.

The primary text that needs to be discussed is from the Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ishma'el, a tannaitic midrash on Exodus, redacted perhaps in the late 3rd or early 4th centuries:

> I am THE LORD your God (Exodus 20:2): Why was it said? For this reason.
>
> At the sea He appeared to them as a mighty hero doing battle, as it is said: "THE LORD is a man of war." At Sinai he appeared to

29. D. Boyarin, "Beyond Judaisms: Metatron and the Divine Polymorphy of Ancient Judaism," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 41 (2010) 323-65.

30. Nearly all dating of classical rabbinic texts is, of course, unsure. This corresponds to generally held opinion now but not a lot here rides on precise dating.

> them as an old man full of mercy. It is said: "And they saw the God of Israel..." (Exod. 24:10). And of the time after they had been redeemed what does it say? "And the like of the very heaven for clearness" (*ibid.*).
> Again it says: "I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit" (Dan. 7:9). And it also says: "A fiery stream issued..." (v. 10). Scripture, therefore, would not let the nations of the world have an excuse for saying that there are two Powers, but declares: "THE LORD is a man of war, THE LORD is His name." He, it is, who was in Egypt and He who was at the sea. It is He who was in the past and He who will be in the future. It is He who is in this world and He who will be in the world to come, as it is said, "See now that I, even I, am He,"... (Deut. 32:39). And it also says: "Who hath wrought and done it? He that called the generations from the beginning. I, THE LORD, who am the first, and with the last am the same" (Isa. 41:4).[31]

In an argument to which Schäfer refers, I had claimed that this text engages with the problem raised by Daniel 7:9-13 in which it seems as if two divine figures, one is an Ancient of Days and "one like a son of man" are to be found. What follows, then, is a revised and expanded reading of the Mekhilta passage in which I hope to advance the claims of my reading over Schäfer. My thesis is that there are two difficult texts being encountered in this midrash: the first is the apparent contradiction between two texts in Exodus, one that says that God is a man of war and one in which God is pictured as an old man full of mercy, suggesting to the "heretics" the possibility that there are Two Sovereignties in Heaven, and a second difficulty aroused by the plurality of the thrones themselves. In addition, a third contradiction is alluded to between two descriptions of the divine throne in a single Exodus verse that might be taken to imply that there are two thrones and thus two divine figures to sit on them. The Torah insists that "I am THE LORD, your God" to emphasize that there is only one, the same one at Sinai and the same one at the Sea in, however, two different manifestations. So far, so good. The precise midrashic proofs for the dangerous possible interpretation require more investigation, however.

How do the Exodus verses raise up the specter of Two Powers in Heaven? There are several dimensions to this question: What is the proof of God's appearance as an Old Man from "At Sinai he

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31. S. Horovitz and I.A. Rabin, ed., *Mechilta d'Rabbi Ismael* (Jerusalem, 1970) 219-20.

appeared to them as an old man full of mercy. It is said: "And they saw the God of Israel..." (Exod. 24:10)"? And secondly, what is the meaning of "And of the time after they had been redeemed what does it say? 'And the like of the very heaven for clearness'" (*ibid.*)? There is no need for demonstration that God is pictured as a man of war; that much is explicit in the verse which is the target of the midrash. In order, however, to discover the "proof" from here that God is portrayed also as an old man, we need to dig deeper.

Schäfer has correctly observed that earlier attempts have failed; his, however, seems to me equally as improbable (I, for my part, more or less just threw up my hands until now).[32] Schäfer's comments that "This verse can serve as proof text for God being an old man only if we take it to literally mean that the enigmatic 'work of sapphire stone' under God's feet — which has worried many exegetes — was in fact his footstool, that is, a footstool needed by an old man." He, thereupon, cites several references from the Targum Ps. Jonathan that indicate that, according to that Targum, the enigmatic object was a footstool. He grants that "in fact, the footstool is completely incomprehensible in our midrash and probably alluded to only because it is directly linked to the sapphire brick [in the Targum Ps. Jonathan][33] and serves here to illustrate that God, in the guise of an old man, is full of mercy."[34] Even if the interpretation itself were convincing, that is a great deal of allusion to an entirely *other* text on which to support the claimed interpretation of a naked verse in the Mekhilta. Even without this consideration, however, the interpretation is less than compelling in itself, for footstools on thrones are not especially characteristic of the aged, as they would need to be for Schäfer's interpretation to carry conviction. Another interpretation, however, is at hand in the immediately following verse:

שמות פרק כד פסוק יא
ואל אצילי בני ישראל לא שלח ידו ויחזו את האלהים ויאכלו וישתו:

> And he did not attack the 'nobles' of the children of Israel and they saw God and they ate and they drank.

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32. For a fuller and more detailed philological examination of the Mekhilta, see my Hebrew paper, D. Boyarin, "Once Again in the Matter of 'Two Powers' in the Mekhilta," *Tarbiz* (2013) forthcoming.

33. Brackets are mine.

34. P. Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* (Princeton [New Jersey], 2012) 58-9.

Although this is by no means the only possible interpretation of the biblical verse, there are many commentators who understand here that the 'nobles of Israel' are the priestly sons Nadav and Abihu who, at this time, are not yet being executed but only later on will be convicted and punished. Whether or not such a specific midrashic situation be understood as lying behind the Mekhilta (and I am a bit skeptical on this point — matching my skepticism in regard to Schäfer's citation of Targum Ps. Jon), the verse can certainly be understood as referring to restraint in judgment; whoever these nobles are, God could have attacked them but didn't, thus demonstrating that God functioned as a judge at Sinai and moreover demonstrated his mercy in judgment and thence his advanced age as a cipher for wisdom and restraint. Just as there is no direct proof from "THE LORD is a man of war" for God's appearance as a youth, there is no direct proof from here for God's appearance as an elder, but it is implied by his mercy. *Senex* זקן for the Rabbis, as is well known, is a semantic equivalent to חכם, sage, and thus judge.

A greater puzzle is presented, however, by the continuation. What does it mean to say that "When they were redeemed נגאלו, then it says 'like the very heaven for clearness?'" What possible redemption could we be talking about in what is, after all, the context of the Revelation at Sinai? Rashi incorporates a reading of this passage that moves us towards an explanation, as we find in his gloss to Exodus 20:2:

רש"י שמות פרק כ פסוק ב

(ב - ג) אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים דבר אחר לפי שנגלה בים כגבור מלחמה, ונגלה כאן כזקן מלא רחמים, שנאמר (שמות כד י) ויראו את אלוהי ישראל ותחת רגליו כמעשה לבנת הספיר, זו היתה לפניו בשעת השעבוד, (שם) וכעצם השמים, משנגאלו, הואיל ואני משתנה במראות אל תאמרו שתי רשויות הן, אנכי הוא אשר הוצאתיך ממצרים ועל הים.

"Who took you out from the Land of Egypt?" Another interpretation, since he appeared to them on the sea as a hero of war and was revealed here as an ancient full of mercy, as it says: "And they saw the God of Israel and under his feet it was the work of a brick of sapphire" (Exod. 24:10). This was before him at the time of their enslavement but "like the vision of heaven for clearness" when they were redeemed. Since I change my appearances, do not say there are two sovereignties: It is I who took you out of Egypt and on the Sea.

The super-commentary of Rabbi Eliahu Mizrahi (1450-1526) has taken us a long way towards understanding this Rashi, which is surely a citation of and gloss on the Mekhilta passage. As Mizrahi explains Rashi's point, the utterance of God at Sinai that "I" am the one who took you out of Egypt is an assertion that "I", who appeared at the Exodus as a warrior (the Sea being the culmination of that redemption) am the one who appears to you now as a merciful elder. So far Mizrahi. But the interpretation of the midrash in Rashi's hands still needs some further super-commentary. I suggest that verse 24:10 is cited for two purposes according to Rashi: one is to establish the appearance of God as merciful and thus old, as explained above, but also to establish that there is a contradiction within the verse between the appearance of the background to the throne, once as a brick of sapphire, and once as the appearance of the clearness of heaven.

Horowitz and Rabin propose that the phrase beginning כשנגאלו אגב גררה does not belong here at all but is cited from another passage in the Mekhilta. That passage reads as follows:

מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל בא - מסכתא דפסחא פרשה יד

כן אתה מוצא כל זמן שישראל משועבדין כביכול שכינה משועבדת עמהם שנ' ויראו את אלהי ישראל ותחת רגליו כמעשה לבנת הספיר (שמות כד י). וכשנגאלו מה הוא אומר וכעצם השמים לטוהר

And so you find that Whenever Israel is enslaved, the Shekina is, so to speak, ensalved with them, for it says "And they saw the God of Israel and under his feet it was like the work of a saphire brick [Exodus 24:10], and when they were redeemed, what does it say? "and like heavens for purity." Melkhilta Tractate Pishka, chapter 14.

Here we can see explicitly that the Mekhilta considers the verse contradictory in its description of the divine environment or the foundation of the throne, describing it once as a sapphire brick and once as a view as clear as the heaven. The text, in addition, makes clear that the change represents two times and two circumstances. When the Israelites were enslaved, the brick was there to remind God, as it were, of their slavery, but when they were redeemed from slavery, it disappeared, and all was a vision of clarity. In that context, however, we do not find this change thematized as raising the specter of two powers in heaven. Now it is barely possible, as Horowitz and Rabin suggest, that part of this text was improperly copied into our passage, but I cannot think of any reason why this should be so. If all that was needed in our context was the verse

itself, why would any of the midrash from another context entirely have been imported at all? I prefer, therefore, Rashi's explanation that the verse is being cited for two purposes in our context, one to demonstrate that God appears as a wise elder (judge) and once to thematize the perceived contradiction between the two appearances of the foundation of the Throne, showing them to be a temporal (modal) difference and not the indication of two separate thrones and divine beings, as some might be inclined to do. In other words, this bit of Mekhilta from בא is not mistakenly copied here but cited as another example of a possible entry for the "nations of the world" to make their claim. This explains why the midrash from בא would have been cited in our context at all. Supporting this view of the matter is the phrase: "He, it is, who was in Egypt and He who was at the sea," suggesting that our Mekhilta was concerned with a "heretical" possibility of identifying two divine figures in these two moments as well. Indeed, without this instance (the two appearances of the Throne), it is difficult to imagine why anyone would conceive of God as having been two different persons, one in Egypt and one at the Sea. With the assumption, however, that God's Throne appeared differently when they were enslaved and when they were (being) redeemed, we can see where that "heretical error" might have arisen, matching up well, moreover, with the concerns about multiple thrones that we have been exposing throughout this discussion.

To sum up Rashi's compelling explanation: The first half of the verse with its sapphire brick, says the midrash, is when they were enslaved and the second with its utter clarity was when they were redeemed, so just as the appearance of the divine throne changes through time and changing circumstance, so also do not think that the different appearances of God as young warrior and as ancient merciful judge indicate more than one God but "I am...," a perfect explanation of modal monarchianism as Jewish orthodoxy (as Christian heresy)![35]

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35. Cf. the following passage from the Apocryphon of John:

> [I] saw within the light a child standing before me. When I saw... like an elderly person. And it changes [its] manner of appearance to be like a young person... in my presence. And within the light there was a multiform image... And the [manners of appearance] were appearing through one another. [And] the [manner of appearance] had three forms.

E.R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Literature* (Princeton [New Jersey], 1994) 39, from whom

This will help us to make better sense of the question on which the larger matter turns, namely the argument from Daniel. I continue to maintain that this citation represented a second instance in which "heretics" could find aid and comfort for their notion that there are an old God and a young God. Just as in the Exodus example, it is the contradiction within the single verse that could suggest that there are two divine sovereignties, so also in the passage of Daniel, one divine sovereign who appears before the Redemption (this time, of the world) and one who will be empowered, the Divine Messiah, at the Redemption, suggesting once again the specter of two sovereignties in heaven. Since the cited text of Daniel refers to a plurality of thrones and indicates explicitly that on one throne there sat an old God but then goes on in the continuation to talk about another divine figure, "One Like a Son of Man," there could be, indeed, and indeed was, reason from the text to imagine two divine figures, two sovereignties in heaven. For this reason as well, our verse emphasizes that it is only THE LORD from the beginning to the end. Now here is the rub: the Mekhilta does not actually quote v. 13 in which the Son of Man figure is mentioned; what it does, it is a quotation of v. 10: "A fiery stream issued and then... ['וגו]". Schäfer, therefore, argues that the Mekhilta does not allude to v. 13 at all as a further example of the possible "error" that could result from imagining two divine figures but only uses v. 9 to further support the point that God appears as an old man. He then has to conclude that "actually v. 10 is superfluous."[36] In other words, the midrash cites v. 10, using its usual formula, "And it also says" to no purpose, having made its point entirely by citing v. 9. I beg to differ. First of all, when looking at v. 10 to the end, we read, דינא יתב וספרין פתיחו:.[37] Once more, then, we have a verse

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I have cited this text here, compares it (rightly) with certain strands within even later rabbinic literature and connects it (compellingly) with later Jewish theosophical traditions (Kabbalah), but this does not, of course, preclude the readings of the Talmud and earlier midrashic texts as resisting these very strands which I am offering here. Indeed, the very vitality of the resistance stands only to point up the vitality of that which is being resisted. See also G. Stroumsa, "Polymorphie divine et transformations d'un mythologème : l'*Apocryphon de Jean* et ses sources," *Vigiliae Christianae* 35 (1981) 412-34.

36. P. Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* (Princeton [New Jersey], 2012) 61.

37. *Pace* P. Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* (Princeton [New Jersey], 2012) 61, there is no reason to suppose that a judge and judgment contradict the idea of mercy; indeed it is only a judge who can be merciful!

that indicates that God's functions as a judge and that when he does, he is pictured as an elder. Verse 10 is thus very much to the point, but in my view, the "..." for *et caetera* indicates that one must continue reading through the mention of the "One like a Son of Man" in v. 13 to finally get the "contradiction" that might lead one to suppose that there are "Two Sovereigns in Heaven." Supporting this understanding of things, once again, is the phrase:

> It is He who was in the past and He who will be in the future. It is He who is in this world and He who will be in the world to come, as it is said, 'See now that I, even I, am He'... (Deut. 32:39)

This can be seen as a precise response to the possible "erroneous reading" and not mere rhetorical flourish.[38] There are not two divine figures, one who has power now and to whom power will be given at the eschaton, but it is He in this world, and He in the world to come. Even if this literal extension of the allusion to the end be deemed "going too far" (especially according to Geniza manuscripts that cite till the end of v. 10 but have no "'וגו"), one must concede that the mention of plural thrones in v. 9 certainly has the power to call up the specter of multiple Sovereigns in heaven, a specter that hovers over all of the rest of the chapter.[39]

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38. Cf. Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 21 and see on this text, E.R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Literature* (Princeton [New Jersey], 1994) 39.

39. I wish to acknowledge here a correct critique of my argument about this in D. Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York, 2012) made in Schäfer's recent review of same. In its biblical context, the verses' "thrones" may very well be, and probably are, more than two and for the entire court. I have, therefore, here more carefully phrased matters than in my previous formulations. As Schäfer correctly remarks the only place where the thrones are explicitly read as two is in the midrash we have seen above in the Babylonian Talmud which, while it cites Palestinian tannaim, might very well be a product of the later Babylonian tradents. There are, however, other rabbinic texts, parallel to our Mekhilta — not only the Bavli — in which we find more explicitly the reading of the Daniel verse as being about two thrones for the Ancient of Days and his Younger Companion, as it were. See, for instance, the Mekhilta de-Rashbi:

> THE LORD is a Man of War — Since the Holy Blessed One appeared on the sea as a youth doing battle, as it says THE LORD is a Man of War [but] appeared at Sinai as an elder, as it says, "until thrones were set up and the Ancient of Days sat... So much why? In order not to give an opening to the nations of the world to say that there are two sovereignties in heaven: THE LORD is a man of war; he battled in Egypt; THE LORD is his name, He is the same one in Egypt and on the sea and

In order to see a text that *does* say what Schäfer claims the Mekhilta says, we need only look as far as Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, where we find:

> לפי שנראה להן הקדוש ברוך הוא בים כגיבור עושה מלחמה, ונראה להם בסיני כסופר מלמד תנאה, ונראה להם בימי דניאל כזקן מלמד תורה, נראה להם בימי שלמ' בחור, אמ' להן הקדוש ברוך הוא לא בשביל שאתם רואים אותי בדמוייות הרבה, אלא אני הוא שבים, אני הוא שבסיני, אנכי י"י אלהיך (שם /שמות כ'/).
> פסיקתא דרב כהנא (מנדלבוים) פיסקא יב - בחדש השלישי

> Since the Holy, Blessed One appeared to them on the sea like a hero doing war, and appeared to them at Sinai like a scribe teaching, a Tanna, and appeared to them as an elder in the days of Daniel, and as a youth in the days of Solomon, the Holy, Blessed One said to them, "Not because you see me in many guises but it is I at the Sea and I at Sinai: I am THE LORD your God (Exodus 20).

At first glance, this parallel would seem to support Schäfer's argument, since in this text it is absolutely clear and explicit that the Daniel citation is only to prove that God appears as an Ancient sometimes, just as Schäfer had read the Mekhilta.[40] There are, however, two very telling points against this. First, obviously, the Pesikta does not cite or allude at all to the sequel in Daniel, but even more significantly, the Pesikta shows that the rhetoric of the

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at the Jordan and at the Rivers of Arnon; he is in this world and he is in the next world, he was in the past and he is in the future.
J.N. EPSTEIN – E.Z. MELAMED, *Mekhilta d'Rabbi Sim'on b. Jochai* (Jersualem, 1955) 233.

Although it is not absolutely proven that the problem of the two thrones is what lies at the heart of this passage, so close to our Mekhilta, I find such a reading extremely attractive indeed, nearly inescapable, if not entirely so. See on this text also E.R. WOLFSON, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Literature* (Princeton [New Jersey], 1994) 34. See also my discussion of this passage in D. BOYARIN, "Once Again in the Matter of 'Two Powers' in the Mekhilta," *Tarbiz* (2013) forthcoming. I only dissent from Wolfson's (and most other scholars') assumption that the difficulty that the midrash raises is the repetition of the name "THE LORD"; that repetition is, rather, the *solution* to the difficulty raised by the apparent doubleness of his appearances. The two namings of "THE LORD" insist that He is the same one, thus refuting those who wish to see two divine figures in those anthropomorphic depictions.

40. On this passage also, see E.R. WOLFSON, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Literature* (Princeton [New Jersey], 1994) 35.

midrash requires that the second example in which God is portrayed as Ancient requires a balancing instance of him as a youth! In the Pesikta this is supplied by the reference to Song of Songs; in the Mekhilta, I submit, by the allusion to the multiplicity of thrones in Daniel. If it is a mistake to read back into the Mekhilta from the Bavli (a mistake that I have not made), it would equally be a mistake to make the later Pesikta a control for the quite different text in the Mekhilta (a mistake that Schäfer has not made either). Sometimes a Palestinian text just finds its best parallels in the Bavli and not in other Palestinian literature.

Schäfer simply says that the citation of the verse with its opening formula and the "וגו'" contribute nothing to the meaning of the passage. This is, one would have to concede, a major weakness in his interpretation. Finally in order to read as Schäfer does, one needs to assume that the author of the Mekhilta, in treating the very question of "Two Sovereignties in Heaven," cited the Daniel passage most often actually used in Antiquity by "rivals" of the Rabbis, whether apocalyptic "Enochians" or Jesus-folk, to support the duality of the godhead, but ignored or was ignorant of its very implications and the way that it had been used and was being used by actual "heretics." In other words, in confronting the very "heresy," the midrashist naively came dangerously close to inadvertently citing their major proof-text without realizing what he was doing. This seems to me implausible to the point of incredulity. In contrast, according to the reading that I am proposing a highly serious Mekhilta was engaged in a serious way with the claims of Jews who did see in Daniel as well as in other places in the Torah the possibility of imagining different divine persons behind the different descriptions of God in the Torah, when warring and when judging, before the Exodus and after, in this world and the next.

Since this is a key argument for Schäfer in deciding that the whole school of thought (Idel,[41] Wolfson,[42] Orlov,[43] Gruenwald,[44] Boyarin[45]) that wishes to connect the Babylonian manifestations

41. M. Idel, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism* (London-New York, 2007).

42. E.R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Literature* (Princeton [New Jersey], 1994) chap. 3.

43. A.A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* (Tübingen, 2005).

44. I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden, 1980).

45. Which is not, of course, to say that I agree with all of the details of the theories and interpretations of the aforementioned. Thus, for instance, *pace* Gruenwald, I find it highly unlikely that the Hekhalot texts are Palestin-

of such apocalyptic with earlier Palestinian Jewish ones is entirely and utterly wrong, this point of midrashic interpretation is far from arcane. Let me therefore make once again as clear as I can the differences between the two interpretations of the Mekhilta passage:

Schäfer	Boyarin
One verse from Exodus proves God young.	Two verses from Exodus are cited to prove God sometimes old and sometimes young.
A second verse from Exodus proves God old, owing to its alleged allusion to a footstool, imported from an entirely different text.	A perceived contradiction between two halves of the second Exodus verse, explicitly thematized in another passage of the Mekhilta, is alluded to, its resolution germane to the "solution" to our problem as well.
A verse from Daniel is cited to prove God old.	An allusion to the multiplicity of thrones in Daniel 7 is cited as another source of putative support for the "heretics."
Another verse from Daniel is cited to no purpose whatever.	

With regard to the text from the Babylonian Talmud discussed above, Schäfer concedes that "As I said above, the sugya expounds Daniel 7:9, but there is a conspicuous lack of reference to the 'Son of Man' of Daniel 7:13f.; yet here, unlike in the Mekhilta, the reference to David makes sense only if we include the Son of Man (p. 73)." I submit that, as I hope to have shown, the Mekhilta passage also only "makes sense if we include the Son of Man," for otherwise we simply have to — as Schäfer has himself conceded — completely disregard (delete?) a whole passage in that text. In order to drive a wedge between a supposedly inchoate Palestinian tradition and a supposedly more mature Babylonian tradition (informed by Trinitarian Christianity), Schäfer employs what can only be regarded as

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ian in textual origin, cf. I. GRUENWALD, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden, 1980) ix. In general, I find my own perceptions closest to those of Wolfson.

special pleading, allowing in the second case an allusion to Daniel 7:13 (with a "conspicuous lack of reference" of it) that he disallows in the first. It is only on the basis of this special pleading that he can then conclude that, "Here I disagree with Boyarin, who, as we have seen, seeks to transport the Babylonian debate back into the Mekhilta. The Bavli, I posit, clearly reflects not just a dispute with Christian doctrines but most likely even presupposes knowledge of the New Testament as a canonic text, whereas the Mekhilta and most other Palestinian sources are dealing with less specified and more amorphous ideas that are still emerging and have not yet crystallized into their final form" (81).[46] In short, a cited passage in the Mekhilta may not be extended to a verse in that very passage, but in the Bavli, one needs and ought to do precisely that. (As I hope to have convinced above, whether I am right or wrong in my reading of the Mekhilta, the operation has not been ever an attempt to "transport the Babylonian debate back into the Mekhilta"). The issue is, then, it seems not so much methodological as Schäfer wishes to present it, as hermeneutical; it turns on the evaluations of two different approaches to interpreting the Mekhilta passage. The consequences are, however, not insignificant at all. The stakes here are nothing less than a picture of the history of relations between the religious genealogy of late-ancient Jews and Christians.

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46. On p. 5, he writes of me: "He even goes so far as to suggest that we regard Christianity not as a 'sect' within ancient Judaism again which the rabbis fought but as an integral part of the rabbinic mind-set." Where I have held or expressed such a view, I would have, indeed, gone way "too far." What I did say — and quite clearly I believe — was that earliest Christianity ought not be considered a sect of Judaism but simply a form of Judaism at that time, and, moreover, that some of the religious ideas we take to be most characteristic of what later becomes Christianity were extant among other Jews of the time even within rabbinic circles as well. What is presented within rabbinic literature as a fight against contamination from without is, at least sometimes if not always, an expulsion of ideas from within. As such I certainly do not "desire to integrate Christianity into rabbinic Judaism" but to show that rabbinic Judaism is, in part, constituted by the rejection of some ancient Jewish religious notions retained within the Judaism that evolved into Christianity. Quite a different proposition I would suggest. Oddly, in the continuation of the paragraph, Schäfer presents as his own, precisely the view that I had — when accurately read — articulated. I wrote: "Once we fully take in that 'Christianity' is simply part and parcel of ancient Judaism;" Schäfer glossed this as "the harmonious picture Boyarin draws of an unbroken continuity of Enochic and Christian traditions *within* rabbinic Judaism," as if "ancient Judaism" is a cipher for "rabbinic Judaism"!

According to Schäfer's approach, the Babylonian passage is completely severed from any previous rabbinic tradition. It is only thus that Schäfer can conclude that Jewry did not continue into the rabbinic age some of its ancient apocalyptic strands which occur also in the Gospels and thus later Christian thought, but instead that the Babylonian Jews were profoundly impacted and imitated the Christianity of their time.[47] Once again the issue is not methodological or theoretical but empirical. Above in this paper, I certainly accept late-ancient Christian impact on Babylonian rabbinic Judaism in principle, but it is a far cry from that to the Gospel-reading Babylonian Rabbis of Schäfer.[48] I have tried to make here an interpretative case for the continuity of these particular apocalyptic ideas over the (rather porous) boundaries that divide between 3rd century Palestinian and 4th or 5th century Babylonian rabbinic traditions, that is, not assumed continuity but argued for it. Schäfer argues against it on the grounds of his interpretation of that text. To assume that what is in the Bavli is already in earlier Palestinian literature is a serious error, of course, but to assume that there is *ipso facto* no continuity between the two is an even more egregious mistake "in my humble opinion." Since the baker cannot testify to his dough, I will have to leave it to others to determine which reading — if either of them — is more convincing, and, I am sure, there will be dissension on

47. I am hardly guilty of "a misguided attempt to harmonize the historical dissonances — ignoring all geographical (Palestine and Babylonia) and chronological boundaries." Indeed, I explicitly wrote in one of the essays which Schäfer cites in this context that "Let me be clear that in my view this is not evidence for early Palestinian rabbinic traditions, the object of the narratives of the Babylonian Talmud, but rather to the subjects of the enunciation of the narratives and their traditions that I assume were formed in late antiquity and in Babylonia, not to the Rabbis who are told about but to the Rabbis who did the telling," D. Boyarin, "Beyond Judaisms: Metatron and the Divine Polymorphy of Ancient Judaism," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 41 (2010) 339. In other words, I do explicitly, as always, allow for local and chronologically late, independent development of traditions in Babylonia as well as for difference between the two differently diasporic — but diasporic with each other — communities of Rabbis.

48. As argued in the first section above. Also, I do not deny the possibility of knowledge of Gospels among the Babylonian Rabbis; the earliest forms of what would become *Toldot Yeshu*, appearing in the Bavli, seem to presuppose such acquaintance. See D. Boyarin, "Patron Saint of the Incongruous: Rabbi Me'ir, The Talmud, and Menippean Satire," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009) 531-536. To this extent, I have both agreed with Schäfer and learned from him.

this. I turn now to the locale within the Talmudic tradition that I take to be the clearest case for such diachronic connections, namely Metatron, the rabbinic (so I claim) successor to the Son of Man.[49]

5. Reading Apocalypse in the Bavli: Talmudic Metatron and Ancient Enoch

Schäfer makes in this context a really compelling point, showing that a Babylonian Talmudic text in which the highest angel, potentially identified with or "confused" with a second divine person, named Metatron can only (or at any rate best) be understood on the basis of traditions such as that found in 3 Enoch in which Enoch is transformed into Metatron explicitly. Given, however, that Schäfer declines any possibility of seeing connections between the early Enoch apocalypses 1 and 2 Enoch and the much later Hebrew text, known as 3 Enoch, he ends up with some very extreme conclusions. Not so much seeking here to discredit Schäfer's view directly, I hope by presenting an alternative account to strengthen the case for continuity between ancient apocalyptic and late-ancient Throne mysticism. Little in the argument is completely new (with one important exception, see below), but I hope that by re-presenting it in new terms, its attractiveness will be apparent.

The narrative of Rabbi Akiva's redemption from heresy is followed in the text of *Ḥagiga* by the even more well-known story of Elisha ben Abuya's apostasy. This famous heretic, upon seeing a vision of the glorious being named Metatron sitting at the right hand of God, concluded that there are "Two powers in heaven," the arch-heresy of the Talmud.[50]

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49. In what follows in this section, I repeat with a difference some of the argument made in D. Boyarin "Beyond Judaisms: Metatron and the Divine Polymorphy of Ancient Judaism," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 41 (2010) 323-365. I have tried to be as minimalistic in the repetition as possible and have augmented and corrected my arguments in response to Schäfer's critique.

50. In my article D. Boyarin, "Beyond Judaisms: Metatron and the Divine Polymorphy of Ancient Judaism," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 41 (2010) 323-365, I have discussed (and disagreed with) a very different interpretation of this material by A. Goshen-Gottstein, *The Sinner and the Amnesiac: The Rabbinic Invention of Elisha Ben Abuya and Eleazar Ben Arach* (Stanford [California], 2000) 89-111.

According to the Talmud:

> Our Rabbis have taught: Four went into the *Pardes*, and who are they? Ben ʿAzzai and Ben Zoma, Aḥer, and Rabbi Akiva... Aḥer chopped down the shoots. Rabbi Akiva came out safely...
> 'Aḥer chopped down the shoots': Of him the verse says, "Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin" (Ecclesiastes 5:5). What does this mean? He saw that Metatron had been given permission [רשות] to sit and write the good deeds of Israel. He said, but it is taught that on high there will be no sitting, no conflict, no "back,"[51] and no tiredness! Perhaps, G-d forbid, there are two powers [שתי רשויות]! They took Metatron out and whipped him with sixty whips of fire. They said to him: "What is the reason that when you saw him, you did not get up before him?" He [Metatron] was given permission to erase the good deeds of Aḥer. A voice came out from heaven and said: Return O backsliding ones (Jeremiah 3:14.22) — except for Aḥer.
> He said, "Since that man has been driven out of that world, let him go out and enjoy himself in this world!" He went out to evil culture. He went and found a prostitute and solicited her. She said, "But are not you Elisha ben Abuya?" He went and uprooted a radish on the Sabbath and gave it to her. She said, "He is another (Aḥer)."
> (Babylonian Talmud, *Ḥagiga* 15*a*)

This remarkable story, as can well be imagined, has excited much scholarly attention. Yehuda Liebes emphasizes correctly that it is impossible to see this as a narrative of a real Elisha who joined a heretical sect.[52] Segal nicely observes that "in its present context (the story) is an etiology of heresy. It explains how certain people, who had special Metatron traditions, risk the heretical designation of 'two powers in heaven'."[53] This can be pushed a bit further. As J. Rendell Harris observed as early as 1917: "We now begin to see that the controversy between Arius and Athanasius is not a mere struggle of an orthodox Church with an aggressive and cancerous heresy: the heretic is the orthodox conservative, and the supposed orthodox champion is the real progressive."[54] The structural

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51. See below for explanation of this term.

52. Y. Liebes, *The Sin of Elisha: Four Who Entered Pardes and the Nature of Talmudic Mysticism* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1990) 12.

53. A.F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden, 1977) 62.

54. J.R. Harris, *The Origin of the Prologue to St. John's Gospel* (Cambridge, 1917) 49. See also Ch. KANNENGIESSER, "Alexander and Arius

comparison with Christian etiologies of heresy and heresiarchs suggests that, like those, Aḥer represents older theological traditions which have been anathematized as heresy by the authors of the story.[55] Almost certainly underlying Aḥer/Elisha's vision of Metatron is the same passage in Daniel that "misled" Rabbi Akiva, taking the "One like a Son of Man" as a separate person. The latter's error was hermeneutical/theological, the former's is visionary/theological, but the error is essentially precisely the same, the assumption that the second throne is for a second divine figure. Let me now argue for that conclusion.

The cause of Aḥer's turn to heresy, as we have it in the Bavli, is very very puzzling. On the one hand, it is clear that it is the fact of Metatron's sitting that causes Aḥer to fall into error but on the other hand, his own speech about this seems incoherent, or nearly so, as he remarks that "but it is taught that on high there will be (no standing,)[56] no sitting, no (jealousy), no conflict, no 'back' and no tiredness!"[57] How is the rest of this list, other than the sitting itself to be connected with Metatron's seated posture, and what in this long list caused Aḥer to consider the possibility of Two Powers in Heaven? On the one hand, there are indications — at least in most witnesses — that the sitting evoked thoughts of competition between God and Metatron, but directly contradicting that is the suggestion that Metatron sat because he was tired, which would certainly suggest his mortality, not his divinity![58] The list

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of Alexandria: The Last Ante-Nicene Theologians," *Compostellanum* 35 (1990) 391-403.

55. For comparison to an actual observable historical instance within late ancient Christianity, see V. Burrus, *The Making of a Heretic: Gender, Authority, and the Priscillianist Controversy* (Berkeley-Los Angeles [California], 1995).

56. Following several manuscripts.

57. For discussion of the various recensions of this list, see N. Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate: Angelic Vice Regency in Late Antiquity* (Leiden-Boston, 1999) 50-1, following in part Ph.S. Alexander, "3 Enoch and the Talmud," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 18 (1987) 40-68.

58. For all of these puzzlements, see Ph.S. Alexander, "3 Enoch and the Talmud," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 18 (1987) 58. On this last point, cf. J. Fraenkel, *Sipur Ha-Agadah, Ahdut Shel Tokhen Ve-Tsurah: Kovets Mehkarim. [Aggadic Narrative]* (Tel Aviv, 2001) 342, who quite cleverly makes sense of the whole list, from sitting through conflict to tiredness, but does not notice apparently that there is a built in contradiction in the list as he reads it. His interpretation of the conflict or competition as between different angels and not as rivalry with God quite misses the point in my opinion, as well.

is, in short, incoherent. Philip Alexander suggests that the list has been imported from another text (which is not extant) in which it is asserted that "God and the angels are without body parts or passions. In rather Platonic fashion it defined the heavenly world as the negation of all that we know and experience here on earth."[59] We can build a bit further on this crucial insight. Michal Bar-Asher Segal remarked of this list that it is hermeneutic in character as well as Platonic.[60] Each of the elements in the list refers to a verse: thus, for standing, we find Numbers 12:5, where the verse reads: "And THE LORD came down on a column of cloud and stood in front of the Tent." Or for another striking example, when the verse of Job 25:2, "He makes peace in his heaven," is taken to mean that there is conflict, תחרות, in heaven by the early midrash (Sifre Bamidbar 42), using in this case exactly the same word as that which our text denies. Similarly we can find verses that suggest, imply, or actually impute, jealousy, tiredness, and sitting, of course.[61] The crux, "back," is now neatly solved as well. Referring to the back of God that Moses allegedly saw (Exodus 33:23), the text denies the literal existence of that as well.[62] Our statement comes to indicate that these are all metaphorical and not literal statements, and no more. The original point of the statement was simply that God has no body and thus none of these characteristics that seem implied by the biblical text.

Alexander further remarks correctly that in the Bavli the implication of this text has been distorted and made to seem as if what we learn from it is that angels cannot sit because they are said to have "straight legs," (a notion that is found in such texts as Bereshit Rabba). He suggests, moreover, that the version of Munich 95 which does not mention Metatron as sitting at all is to be preferred as the oldest. He proposes that since the version of Munich 95 left the reason for Aḥer's error unfathomable, later redactors "seized on the element ישיבה [sitting] in the quotation... and interpreted it in the light of the idea that angels in heaven do

59. Ph.S. Alexander, "3 Enoch and the Talmud," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 18 (1987) 61.

60. Personal communication.

61. For tiredness, see God's resting on the seventh day. God is, indeed, described as a "jealous" God; see, for example Numbers 20:4.

62. Elliot Wolfson made a similar suggestion to me with respect to this element also.

not sit."[63] The bottom line of Alexander's reconstruction is that the alleged earliest text is so cryptic as to be unintelligible and the later text-forms are incoherent.

I believe that there is another solution at hand, one offered by Alexander's work itself (although tacitly rejected by him). In his article, Alexander has discussed the connection between our passage and its parallel in 3 Enoch. Here is the text in his translation:[64]

> Rabbi Ishmael said to me: The angel Metatron, Prince of the Divine Presence, the glory of highest heaven, said to me:
> At first I was sitting on a great throne at the door of the seventh palace, and I judged all the denizens of the heights, the *familia* of the Omnipresent, on the authority of the Holy One, blessed be he. I assigned greatness, royalty, rank, sovereignty, glory, praise, diadem, crown, and honour to all the Princes of Kingdoms, when I sat in the heavenly court. The Princes of Kingdoms stood beside me, to my right and to my left, by authority of the Holy One, blessed be he.
> But when Aher came to behold the vision of the Merkabah and set eyes on me, he was afraid and trembled before me.[65] His soul was alarmed to the point of leaving him because of his fear, dread and terror of me, when he saw me seated upon a throne like a king, with ministering angels standing beside me like servants, and all the Princes of Kingdoms crowned with crowns surrounding me.
> Then he opened his mouth and said: "There are indeed two powers in heaven!"
> Immediately a heavenly voice came out from the presence of the Shekhinah and said: "Return, backsliding children — except for Aher!"
> Then ʿAnafiʾel-THE LORD, the honoured, glorified, beloved, wonderful, terrible, and dreadful Prince came at the dispatch of the Holy One, blessed be he, and struck me with sixty lashes of fire and made me stand upon my feet.[66]

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63. Ph.S. Alexander, "3 Enoch and the Talmud," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 18 (1987) 63.

64. Ph.S. Alexander, "3 Enoch and the Talmud," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 18 (1987) 54-66.

65. To me, the connection between this sitting, that of Christ, the thrones of Daniel 7, is irresistible, although Schäfer does resist it. See also the clearly connected enthronement images of the Hekhalot literature, on which E.R. Wolfson, "*Yerida la-Merkava*: Typology of Ecstasy and Enthronement in Ancient Jewish Mysticism," in R.A. Herrera, ed., *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typologies* (New York, 1993) 23-26, is essential.

66. Ph.S. Alexander, "3 Enoch and the Talmud," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 18 (1987) 63-64.

These two texts are clearly closely related. Most scholars from Urbach to Alexander to Goshen-Gottstein make the 3 Enoch version dependent on the Talmudic story, while a few dissent.[67] I will file a brief here for the dissent.[68] The Enoch version, which is coherent and intelligible, is the source for the Talmudic version which is not.[69] Alexander argues that the text in 3 Enoch has been based, not only on the Bavli, but specifically on the latest recension of it. One would have to assume that an incomprehensible text led to an incoherent one and out of the incoherent one, a brilliant redactor or rewriter produced the powerful coherent narrative of 3 Enoch. I propose rather that that perfectly coherent and powerful narrative that we find in 3 Enoch (without claiming necessarily that this is its original home) was the earlier form of this narrative, distorted in all

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67. E.E. Urbach, "The Traditions About Merkabah Mysticism in the Tannaitic Period," [Hebrew] in E.E. Urbach, R.J. Zwi Werblowsky – Ch. Wirszubski, ed., *Studies in Mysticism and Religion, presented to Gershom G. Scholem on his seventieth birthday by pupils, colleagues and friends* (Jerusalem, 1967) 1-28; Ph.S. Alexander, "3 Enoch and the Talmud," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 18 (1987) 54-66; A. Goshen-Gottstein, *The Sinner and the Amnesiac: The Rabbinic Invention of Elisha Ben Abuya and Eleazar Ben Arach* (Stanford [California], 2000); the dissenters are Chr. Morray-Jones, "Hekhalot Literature and Talmudic Tradition: Alexander's Three Test Cases," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 22 (1991) 1-39, and N. Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate: Angelic Vice Regency in Late Antiquity* (Leiden-Boston, 1999). See discussion below in the body of the text.

68. This does not preclude the possibility of secondary "contamination" from Talmudic sources in the tradition of 3 Enoch but it does suggest that the Merkava traditions, including this one about Metatron, developed semi-independently of the Talmudic tradition and engaged in various forms of interaction with that tradition. For a similar perspective, see Chr. Morray-Jones, "Hekhalot Literature and Talmudic Tradition: Alexander's Three Test Cases," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 22 (1991) 34-39.

69. *Pace* Ph.S. Alexander, "3 Enoch and the Talmud," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 18 (1987) 65. There is, to be sure, yet another possibility, namely that the Enoch text preserves an earlier version of the Talmudic text and that the version in the Talmud has been tampered with by later editors. This may indeed be the correct solution (albeit rather over complicated — Ockham's razor is, not infrequently, defeated by Murphy's Law but it is hard to know when), but would not appreciably change my argument. A further consideration in favor of Murphy's Law here is the point made by E.R. Wolfson, "*Yerida la-Merkava*: Typology of Ecstasy and Enthronement in Ancient Jewish Mysticism," in R.A. Herrera, ed., *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typologies* (New York, 1993) 25, that in the Enoch text, our passage is an obvious interpolation.

of the recensions of the Talmud for a particular rabbinic polemical reason. I agree with Alexander that the purpose of the author of 3 Enoch was to validate Metatron speculation while that of the Talmud was to delegitimate that very speculation; I simply disagree as to whose intervention came first. In the Enochian version of the story, Metatron himself emphasizes that he was seated on a throne and judging on the authority of the Holy One. I think it highly likely that this statement of authority to sit is a marked allusion to the very enthronement scene in Daniel 7 which has been the pumping heart of the tradition. Aḥer's confusion is occasioned precisely by this allusion which he gets too: Is it possible that the interpretation of those verses from Daniel so current in Israel and lately declared heretical is true? Perhaps there are indeed Two Sovereigns in Heaven (although, to be sure, in the Enochic version there is not even that moment of doubt: Aḥer simply declares that there are Two Sovereigns in Heaven). In the Talmudic version of the story which deliberately — in my view — obliterates the throne, all that is left is the sitting, so tame as, according to Alexander, to be explicable as "a posture, he has adopted, it seems, because he functions as the recording angel in the heavenly law court."[70] In short, I suggest that the list of standing, sitting, necks, and tiredness is a kind of camouflage of the original issue which is thereby hidden in plain sight. The issue is precisely the "sitting" and the specter that that called up was precisely "Two Sovereigns in Heaven," that theologumenon that was so closely connected with the doubled throne of Daniel 7 as well as the theological developments of that within the world that surrounded the Rabbis into a doctrine of two divine persons, wherever such developments had taken place or were still taking place. [71]

There is another support for this conclusion as well. The word translated "permission" would be much better translated as authority,

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70. Ph.S. Alexander, "3 Enoch and the Talmud," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 18 (1987) 56. I, accordingly, could hardly disagree with Alexander more when he says, "The cause of Aher's blasphemy may not have been what Metatron was doing, but rather his glorious appearance," Ph.S. Alexander, "3 Enoch and the Talmud," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 18 (1987) 62. For another example of one holding Alexander's view on this matter, see M. Idel, "Enoch is Meṭaṭron," *Immanuel* 24/25 (1990) 225, who totally elides the "sitting" which to my mind is the very crux of the matter.

71. Cf. E.R. Wolfson, "*Yerida la-Merkava*: Typology of Ecstasy and Enthronement in Ancient Jewish Mysticism," in R.A. Herrera, ed., *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typologies* (New York, 1993) 42, n. 101.

power, or sovereignty, as it is the same word, רשות, that appears in that very heretical thought of Aḥer: "Perhaps (G-d forbid), there are Two Sovereigns" [שתי רשויות] and, indeed, bears close comparison with the Greek ἐξουσία too, as shown by Segal.[72] Far better, I think, to translate "Two Sovereignties in Heaven." The same word that is used to indicate the authority or sovereignty given Metatron to sit and write the virtues of Israel [רשות] is used to indicate the name of the alleged heresy. I suggest, therefore, that it was the combination of sitting, suggesting the enthronement, and authority or sovereignty to sit and judge that is represented as both Aḥer's mistake, bringing the Talmudic text very — and crucially — close to the 3 Enoch version, in which it is the fact of Metatron's enthronement which leads to the idea of Two Sovereignties.[73] Both versions, 3 Enoch's and the Talmud's as I interpret it, go back to Daniel 7:13, and the Talmudic רשות is the equivalent in Hebrew of the שלטן awarded the "One like a Son of Man," where the Septuagint gives ἐξουσία. When Aḥer saw that sovereignty had been awarded to Metatron to sit, it is no wonder that he concluded (even tentatively) that there are Two Sovereignties in Heaven, namely precisely God and that "One Like a Son of Man," to whom sovereignty [שלטן] had been awarded in Daniel. Whether called Metatron or David, Enoch or Jesus, the second divine figure is the Son of Man. Locating this "heretical" interpretation right at the heart of the rabbinic academy and indeed among some of its leading figures strongly suggests that these views had been current in the very Jewish circles from which the Rabbis emerged and the views were eventually anathematized by them and driven out. Metatron is scourged with sixty *pulse* of fire, just as Gabriel was for a similar infraction in another Talmudic text (*Yoma* 77*a*). As we learn from Babylonian Talmud *Baba Meṣia* 47*a*, this practice (whatever it quite means in terms of realia) represents a particularly dire form of anathema or even excommunication. The dual inscription of excommunication in the narrative, that of Metatron on the one hand and of his "devotee" on the other, suggests strongly to me that it is the belief in this figure as second divine person that is being anathematized (although somehow the Rabbis seem unable to completely dispense with him — he was just

72. See also A.F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden, 1977) 7, n. 8.

73. Indeed, it would be strange to find the word רשות here and claim that it is not connected with the שתי רשויות, which is, after all, only the plural of the exact same noun. Someone must have seen this before me.

too popular it would seem). I would take this story as a further oblique recognition and allegorical representation of the fact that this "heresy" was once comfortably *within* "Judaism" and has only lately become *Aḥer*, "Other."[74]

Following Alexander's insight that the phrase "but it is taught that on high there will be (no standing,)[75] no sitting, no (jealousy), no competition, no 'back' and no tiredness!" is an import into the text from another context entirely (albeit a very early import), the weak explanation for Elisha's error given by the Talmud can be understood as part of the very process of camouflage of the real reason for Elisha's "confusion," which is identical to that of 3 Enoch. In the version in 3 Enoch, it is the sitting on a throne and with it the imputation of sovereignty that so discomfits Elisha that he becomes Aḥer, the Other one, the one who is Other to himself. This is the case in the Talmud's version as well if we remove the "import" from the text and reconstruct a proto-Talmudic version, which would then read:

> He saw that Metatron had been given sovereignty [רשות] to sit and write the good deeds of Israel. Perhaps, G-d forbid, there are two sovereignties [שתי רשויות]!

This reconstruction would make absolutely clear the good reason for Elisha's "error." And it draws the Talmudic text here closer both to the passage with Rabbi Akiva and the two thrones as well as to the Mekhilta as I have interpreted it. There is, in my view, in the Talmud a nexus of concern about the import (and possible "misreading") of Daniel 7:9-13 which connects that text, the Talmud, in multiple ways with other texts including ancient Palestinian apocalyptic such as the Similitudes of Enoch.

In the Talmud as we find it, this factor has been so modified as to render the text nearly unintelligible. Such a state of affairs

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74. The position, I am taking here, bears comparison with W. Bauer, G. Krodel, and R.A. Kraft, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, (Philadelphia [Pennsylvania], 1971), except that we must avoid entirely such absurd formulations as heresy precedes orthodoxy, as if there are real entities and not merely the constructions of particular politically powerful religious parties at particular historical moments. On the derivation of the name Aḥer, none of the explanations proffered so far are convincing to me including the most recent one of A. Goshen-Gottstein, *The Sinner and the Amnesiac: The Rabbinic Invention of Elisha Ben Abuya and Eleazar Ben Arach* (Stanford [California], 2000) 64-69.

75. Following several manuscripts.

is only explicable, in my view, on the assumption that the clearer text has been muddied on purpose and Metatron's place on the throne next to "THE LORD" left behind. I thus precisely reverse (a kind of reverse philology, as it were) the order of the events from Alexander's reconstruction: The version in 3 Enoch is the oldest one extant (whether or not it originated in the tradition of that book or was imported from a common source between the Bavli as we have it and 3 Enoch). It focused exactly on the question of the second throne which perfectly explains Aḥer's reaction: There are two sovereignties in heaven!

To sum up, according to my reconstruction, a text very like this underlies the Talmud's version as well: Metatron had been given רשות to sit and write, and Elisha concluded quite plausibly that there are שתי רשויות. In order to suppress any such possibility — much as it did in the case of Rabbi Akiva discussed above —, the Bavli imported the "Platonic" text about sitting and standing and necks and tiredness and thus obliterated the throne, making Aḥer's response a barely intelligible reaction to a contradiction between a tradition that angels do not sit and Metatron's sitting. It is not clear in any case how this contradiction about the postures of angels would lead Aḥer to conclude (or even speculate) that there are Two Powers in Heaven, whereas finding Metatron on a Godly throne with sovereignty surely would do that. To my mind, an interpretation such as mine that regards the sitting as the crux of the matter from the beginning to the end of the tradition (however attenuated and blurred in the Talmudic versions — on purpose I warrant) is superior to hypotheses that submit that the sitting motif was born ex nihilo in a later redaction of the Talmud.[76] Quite the opposite: The version in Munich 95 that does not mention sitting seems to me to be a fairly simple sort of scribal error, the omission of a word, and nothing else; this is particularly attractive as a philological suggestion since the words "to write" למכתב and "to sit" למיתב differ in but one letter, easily allowing a haplography. As Professor Saul Lieberman used to say: every scribal error is a lectio difficilior.[77]

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76. *Pace* N. Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate: Angelic Vice Regency in Late Antiquity* (Leiden-Boston, 1999) 66-67, but Deutsch's view is already a big step forward.

77. This renders Alexander's redactional theory considerably less "inescapable" than Chr. Morray-Jones, "Hekhalot Literature and Talmudic Tradition: Alexander's Three Test Cases," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 22 (1991) 23, imagines to which

The "sitting" is indeed the crux, as it invokes the Daniel 7 passage as interpreted midrashically together with Psalms 110:1, e.g., in Mark 14:62 with the "Son of Man" sitting at the right hand of God, the source of Rabbi Akiva's "error" as well. The ascription to Metatron in this text of both judicial and scribal roles, precisely those given to the Son of Man as early as the Similitudes of Enoch, strongly supports this connection as well, although to be sure, these roles are not extant in the 3 Enoch's text. The Talmudic text cannot, in my view, be isolated or insulated from the Enoch tradition as represented in 3 Enoch; it is engaged in a massive struggle, as it itself seems to understand, with such highly ancient and well-rooted elements of Jewish religiosity as the second Throne, and a second divine person who absorbs the translated Enoch. In short, while there is no evidence from here that the Babylonian Rabbis knew of the Mekhilta, this passage and the passage about Rabbi Akiva's "error" can be traced back to the same concerns that motivated the Palestinian authors of the Mekhilta.

The Enoch text is at as much pain to clarify that Metatron worship does not constitute a theological assertion of Two Powers as the Bavli is.[78] Alon Goshen-Gottstein is accordingly fully correct in his conclusion that the whipping of Metatron is not a punishment of the angel but a demonstration to Aḥer that Metatron is not an independent power but a subordinate one.[79] Adducing parallels from other rabbinic texts, he shows how various angelic figures are humiliated when there is a danger that humans might think them second and coequal divinities.[80] What he does not observe, then, is that those Talmudic witnesses that gloss this as a punishment to Metatron for not standing up when Elisha got there, must then represent secondary, late interventions in the text which have simply misunderstood it as a punishment, and, indeed, are only found in

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N. Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate: Angelic Vice Regency in Late Antiquity* (Leiden-Boston, 1999) 54, assents.

78. Cf. N. Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate: Angelic Vice Regency in Late Antiquity* (Leiden-Boston, 1999) 72.

79. A. Goshen-Gottstein, *The Sinner and the Amnesiac: The Rabbinic Invention of Elisha Ben Abuya and Eleazar Ben Arach* (Stanford [California], 2000) 106.

80. See already S. Lieberman, "Metatron, the Meaning of His Name and His Functions," in I. Gruenwald, ed., *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden, 1980) 239.

the later witnesses to the text.[81] These late text forms cannot, then, almost by definition be the source of 3 Enoch, which clearly did understand what the whipping of Metatron meant. Even the notion that Metatron was indemnified for this humiliation via a retaliation against Aḥer for having caused it, which is found in all the versions of the Talmudic text, seems secondary to the sanguine narration by the angel himself of his having been whipped to debunk Elisha's erroneous conclusion.

The famous statement at the end of the narrative of the four who went into Pardes to the effect that Rabbi Akiva came out safely [lit. in peace]," while Aḥer died in infamy, would then be reinterpreted by me to represent a Rabbi Akiva who turned away from "heresy" to orthodoxy, as we are told in the passage regarding the two thrones, and an Elisha who remained adamant in the old traditions. The drama of *this* parting of the ways *within* Enochic Judaism, as it were, surely is to be set in Late Antiquity and not before. With this formulation I am raising something of a challenge to the notion that there is a separate Enochic tradition that is antithetical to and absolutely other to a Mosaic tradition.[82] There is no reason to assume that we are talking about the real Rabbi Akiva and the real Elisha ben Abuya here, nor about early 2nd century realities, and everything, in fact, that we know of rabbinic literature and its practices of ascription militates against such a conclusion. What we have before us, in my view, is a virtual allegory of different

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81. See on this very point J. Fraenkel, *Sipur Ha-Agadah, Ahdut Shel Tokhen Ve-Tsurah: Kovets Mehkarim. [Aggadic Narrative]* (Tel Aviv, 2001) 344, n. 107, with whom I totally agree here.

82. The position that I am thus questioning is primarily that of G. Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways Between Qumran and Enochic Judaism* (Grand Rapids [Michigan], 1998), who has set out the agenda in such productive ways, including allowing generously and graciously for dissenters. Cf. also Ph.S. Alexander, "From Son of Adam to a Second God: Transformation of the Biblical Enoch," in M.E. Stone – T.S. Bergren, ed., *Biblical Figures Outside the Bible* (Harrisburg [Pennsylvania], 1998) 87: "Certain Jewish intellectuals of the Second Temple period came to regard (Enoch) as a major figure of sacred history. They attributed to him an important body of revealed doctrine and elevated him to a position which equaled, and indeed rivaled, that of Moses, the lawgiver of Israel. They started a tradition which continued evolving with surprising vitality down to the Middle ages and which constantly challenged the dominant Mosaic paradigm of Judaism." In my view, Mosaic and Enochic Judaism, far from parting ways, became intertwined very early on (if not *ab origine*; this much I will concede), and any challenge that Enochic traditions posed was entirely from within and not from something outside of Torah Judaism.

historical trends within historical Judaism, those who remained faithful to the old ways, continuing to believe in the Son of Man and were declared heretics and those who turned from such beliefs and adopted the new, improved, "purer," rabbinic Judaism. It should be noted, however, that both groups are apparently observers of the same basic halakhic norms, at least by Late Antiquity, and this is, after all, precisely what the Hekhalot literature would lead us to expect.[83] If the Enochic traditions, as they extend from the Parables forward into 3 Enoch and into Metatron literature, represent indeed the common religious heritage of much of Israel and not particular sectarian formations, as I am convinced they do, then the evidence just offered for such theology in the heart of the rabbinic socio-cultural world is rendered even more cogent.

5.1. Two Caveats

In this context, however, I would like to emphasize an important methodological caution. Wolfson writes:

> There is no attempt here to present a comprehensive review of such a vast corpus. Rather, I have isolated various tradition-complexes that span several centuries of redacted rabbinic texts. Despite the fact that some of the midrashic texts to be discussed are relatively late — that is, from the post-classical period — it is evident that there is a discernible trajectory connected with the traditions that I have isolated regarding the visual imagining of God in iconic form.[84]

The same principle applies in this work of mine of isolating a tradition complex, not claiming it as a universal in rabbinic or any other Judaism. I would not hazard a guess as to how widespread it was among late-ancient Jews, but I would claim that the fair degree of energy expended within rabbinic textual circles to suppress it or, failing that, dilute it to the point of effective suppression indicates a certain liveliness of these old traditions. The Talmudic Rabbis, it would seem, sought, if not surely to get rid of Metatron, to ensure that Jews not regard him as in any sense a second, even if lesser, version of "THE LORD".

There is another significant caution that I make in the wake of comments by Ra'anan Boustan. I hardly intend to posit the

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83. S. Lieberman, "The Knowledge of *Halakha* by the Author (or Authors) of the *Heikhalot*," in I. Gruenwald, ed., *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden, 1980) 241-244.

84. E.R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Literature* (Princeton [New Jersey], 1994) 33.

unbroken historical continuity of an esoteric tradition. To the extent that I have given such an impression, I have to correct it. History, including the history of myths and religious ideas, is always a product of a kind of bricolage, produced within particular historical conditions, and it is remarkable (and necessitates historical explanation) that at the very end of Late Antiquity, on the edges of the "Middle Ages," we find such an explosion of new kinds of texts among Jews. As, I trust, shown above, some of the bricolage includes here bits and pieces picked up from contacts with folks beyond the by-now established borders of Jewry. What I do claim is that important pieces of the bricolage had been circulating among Jews from the Second Temple times, not as an esoteric tradition. Tesserae of these traditions in one form or another show up within rabbinic literature, which is, after all, virtually the only Jewish literature we have between the Second Temple and the appearance of the Hekhalot. This view is, therefore, subtly but decidedly different from the position of scholars of Jewish mysticism who posit otherwise unattested "esoteric channels of transmission." I, therefore, assent to the following description offered by Boustan:

> But, in my view, there is not enough evidence to posit this kind of continuity, nor is it necessary if one is trying to explain the pattern of similarity between early Son of Man traditions and the Metatron episode. Let's just say that you are correct regarding the conceptual/theological similarities between these materials. That would still hardly suggest a single continuous textual or discursive tradition. Isn't it far more plausible and even interesting to consider that there was an episodic, punctuated, and always fraught process of reception that shaped the application or suppression of this material and these ideas in different contexts?[85]

I will allow my assent to these strictures to stand fully for my own intent here. I hardly mean to produce here a "philology without history, wholly dependent on the deus ex machina of 'esotericism' that is so often invoked by scholars in the field of Jewish mysticism to argue for the hoary antiquity and internalist development of certain ideas and or traditions." I am invoking no such thing and I am grateful to Boustan for giving me the occasion to clarify this now (and not in the future, as it were). Rather, what I intend here is to make a case precisely for the broken, fraught, and contested transmission and reception and also that binitarian

85. Ra'anan Boustan, personal communication, February 21st, 2013.

thought had not been (nor ever would be) entirely exiled from the religious life of Jewry. "Why muddy the argument with a claim that presumes this material operated as a timeless, uninterrupted flow of esoteric tradition"; why indeed? "Might this process of transmission have reflected the views and activities of authors with ideological programs and preferences?" Of course, but, not as ex nihilo or only as a product of "outside" influence. "These folks might not have been brilliant as the redactors of the Bavli, but still, they shaped and reshaped these materials using many of the same tools of textual micro-adjustment (shifting around units, adding or dropping phrases...). In other words, they, too, had agency in the ongoing re-invention of Judaism as a discursive tradition."[86] I certainly do not mean to deny agency or creativity on the part of the producers of Hekhalot literature, but rather to take very seriously exactly that "episodic, punctuated, and always fraught *process of reception* (emphasis added) that shaped the application or suppression of this material and these ideas in different contexts." In other words, while, on the one hand, I would certainly and definitely not associate myself with a scholarly tradition which posits "Merkava mysticism" in the Second Temple literature and then goes so far as to use the later literature to reconstruct it, I also reject totally a view that allows for the transmission of these themes only among "Christians" with their eventual appearance in the Hekhalot literature as a product of external influence. Notions of Jesus or Paul as "Merkava mystics" have always seemed risible and grossly ahistorical to me. It is not in any way my intention to associate myself with a line of scholarship that finds an unbroken underground or esoteric tradition that links Second Temple apocalyptic to the Merkava. Rather I am suggesting that in the efforts of rabbinic texts to suppress that which they call "Two Sovereignties in Heaven," we can detect the presence of a binitarian tradition. This has nothing to do with esotericism; frequently enough alternative halakhic traditions can also be found in the attempts of rabbinic texts to discredit them, and then sometimes we find the discredited halakha in one or another "sectarian" text. This is analogical to what we find here in the attempts of rabbinic literature to suppress precisely that which we find well attested in the Enoch texts, the assertion of a divine-human Enoch become Metatron. I thus maintain that there are traceable developments of ideas within the Enoch tradition that indicate — to my mind

86. Personal communication, February 21st, 2013.

— historical connections, namely the ontological transformation of Enoch into divine being and his historical transformation into Metatron, without which neither 3 Enoch nor the Bavli passages are explicable.

6. Is Metatron a Converted Christian?

Schäfer allows that the Bavli and 3 Enoch must have had common older sources to work with but denies any possibility that these earlier sources had any connection with ancient apocalyptic texts or any earlier Palestinian traditions at all.[87] He accordingly concludes:

> Therefore, it seems unlikely that the Jewish concept of Metatron as the YHWH *ha-qatan* exerted any influence on the emergence and crystallization of the Christian doctrine — a possibility that Christoph Markschies recently mapped out as an important avenue of future research; in fact, quite the opposite. Instead of regarding 3 Enoch's Metatron as part of the fabric from which the doctrine of the trinity was woven... we do better to understand the figure of Metatron as an *answer* to the New Testament's message of Jesus Christ. (143)

I agree with Schäfer's rejection of the first possibility, find his second one possible but less than compelling, and wonder at his neglect of a third one, namely the suggestion that what we have in the Bavli and 3 Enoch represents the bricolage of a tradition developed out of old Jewish apocalyptic, paralleling the developments that we have come to call Christianity (which as I have said is not to deny the possibility of cross-fertilization of such traditions).[88] It is simply, I submit, not the case, I contend, that the so-called Pseudepigraphic literature had no legs in later Judaism and was only preserved within Christian circles.[89] I would propose that these apocalyptic

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87. P. SCHÄFER, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton [New Jersey], 2007) 138.

88. Incidentally, *pace* Schäfer, the Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud is *not* very closely related to Syriac at all; see D. BOYARIN, "On the Emergence of the Aramaic Dialects," in Y. ARBEITMAN, ed., *Essays in Historical Linguistics in Memory of J. Alexander Kerns* (Amsterdam, 1982) 613-649. Nonetheless, I do presume that the Babylonian Amora'im were able to converse with their Christian neighbors; this does not prove yet that they read the Gospels in Syriac!

89. See on this point also M. IDEL, "Meṭaṭron: Notes Towards the Development of Myth in Judaism," [Hebrew] in *Eshel Beer-Sheva: Occasional Publications in Jewish Studies* (Beer-Sheva, 1996) 30. See also M. HIMMELFARB,

traditions remained vital among Jews without making any absolutely clear distinction between the Rabbis and other Jews on this point, imagining that alongside of other developments within late-ancient Jewish culture, various forms of apocalyptic thinking and imagining also continued and developed new forms, interacting in differing ways with other streams of rabbinic and para-rabbinic tradition including those that sought to suppress those apocalyptic traditions, and under particular historical conditions being incorporated into the new literary forms of the Hekhalot literature.[90]

In his article, "The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch,"[91] Alexander argues that a pivotal development that is found in this text is the combination of Enoch and the archangel Metatron, arguing that "these two figures originally had nothing to do with each other; there are texts which speak in detail of Enoch's translation but know nothing of Metatron, while there are other texts which mention the angel Metatron without linking him with Enoch. The Metatron of 3 Enoch marks the confluence of two initially quite independent streams of tradition."[92] In his landmark article, Alexander also argues that Enoch's transformation into divine Son of Man in the Parables and especially 2 Enoch[93] enabled the later Merkava and Kabbalistic identifications of Enoch with Metatron, the highest of the angels, arguing that "if such a development had not taken place, Enoch could never have been identified with the archangel Metatron."[94] If this is the case, and

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"Heavenly Ascent and the Relationship of the Apocalypses and the Hekhalot Literature," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 59 (1988) 73-100.

90. Important in this regard is Morray-Jones. I take no, absolutely no, position on the question of mystical or hermeneutical experience.

91. Ph.S. Alexander, "The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 28 (1977) 156-180.

92. Ph.S. Alexander, "The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 28 (1977) 159. On the origins of Metatron himself, Alexander points us to H. Odeberg, *3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch* (New York, 1973) 79-146, and G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1965[2]) 42-55 *inter alia*. See M. Idel, "Enoch is Meṭaṭron," *Immanuel* 24/25 (1990); "Meṭaṭron: Notes Towards the Development of Myth in Judaism," [Hebrew] in *Eshel Beer-Sheva: Occasional Publications in Jewish Studies* (Beer-Sheva, 1996); G.G. Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God: Some Notes on Metatron and Christ," *Harvard Theological Review* 76 (1983) 269-288.

93. This text, once referred to as the "Slavonic Enoch" cannot be so styled any more, since Coptic fragments have now been found for it.

94. Ph.S. Alexander, "The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 28 (1977) 160.

Schäfer has not produced any argument against it, the continuity between 2 and 3 Enoch and thus the passage in the Talmud as well, is further established. We can thus take the roots of that transformation back to 1 Enoch, that is to the Similitudes, and emphasize the generativity of that transformation in the production of both rabbinic (para-rabbinic) and Christian Jewish christology. As Alexander concludes, "We must postulate in consequence an historical link between the Hekhalot mystics and the circles which generated these pseudepigraphic Enoch traditions."[95] The hypothesis of a genetic relationship, or better, a genealogical relationship between the Son of Man of the Gospels and Metatron of late ancient Judaism is thus well founded in my opinion.[96]

The Enoch traditions were indeed, and continued to be right into and through Late Antiquity, the province of Israel *simpliciter* including early Jesus groups and not of a sect within Israel (of course this does not mean that they were of interest to all Jews or all Jewish groups). The Rabbis indeed seek by means of various halakhic rules "the exclusion of (the body of esoteric doctrine), as having no proper place in the public institutions of Judaism."[97] In contrast, however, to Alexander's own view which sees these exclusions as reflecting accepted norms, I would read them as an index of how widespread, and not esoteric at all, these traditions remained.

There is another, to my mind decisive, argument for the genealogical connection between Second Temple apocalyptic and the traditions that we have in both 3 Enoch and the Bavli, namely the context within which the Enoch/Metatron tradition is cited in the Bavli itself, in close textual connection with rabbinic traditions regarding the seven heavens and meteorological phenomena. Although the fact itself of the connection of these latter with ancient apocalyptic has been noted, its importance has not been sufficiently emphasized until now. Ithamar Gruenwald particularly remarks that 1 Enoch is very invested in the revelation of "cosmological and natural phenomena,"[98] while apocalypses

95. Ph.S. Alexander, "The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 28 (1977) 160.

96. Cf. G.G. Stroumsa, "Form(s) of God: Some Notes on Metatron and Christ," *Harvard Theological Review* 76 (1983) 269-288.

97. Ph.S. Alexander, "The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 28 (1977) 167-168.

98. I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden, 1980) 14-18.

composed somewhat later than that one manifest much less curiosity on this score.[99] In the *Ḥagiga* text to which I have been referring here and only three folios prior to the story of Metatron (12*b*), we find an elaborate account of the seven heavens together with flamboyant interest in cosmological and meteorological phenomena such as are found in the Parables of Enoch and 2 Enoch.[100] "This, naturally, reminds us of the fact already observed by several scholars, that, in apocalyptic literature and, also, in later mystical literature the interest in cosmological and theosophical matters goes hand in hand."[101] It seems, therefore, no coincidence that in Bavli *Ḥagiga*, the cosmological matter and the eminently theosophical narratives about the throne and Metatron appear together and that a tradition, not of course necessarily written, linking this pericope in the Bavli to earlier apocalyptic texts from Palestine may plausibly be hypothesized. I am not entering here into the debates about the content or function of the cosmological material or asking whether or not it is esoteric or exoteric, so-called scientific or mystical, only suggesting that the fact of the close, and non-trivial, literary proximity within the Talmudic tractate of cosmological material and Enoch/Metatron material suggests continuity between these two corpora. The bottom line of my argument is that rather than seeing the Bavli's apocalyptically-themed *materia* especially as found in tractate *Ḥagiga* as coming from only one source or as only having been developed/invented as a "Jewish" answer to a fully-formed and

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99. I. GRUENWALD, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden, 1980) 48. It should be noted that the text in question is not just 1 Enoch but the Parables or Similitudes of Enoch which very likely has its own characteristics, its own origin, and its own transmission history. I think given current thinking about the dating of these texts relative to each other, the linearity of this plotting might need rethinking (D. SUTER, "Enoch in Sheol: Updating the Dating of the Parables of Enoch," in G. BOCCACCINI, ed., *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* [Grand Rapids (Michigan), 2007] 415-433). Thus, for instance, the Similitudes of Enoch might be very close in date to the Vorlage of the text we call 2 Enoch. The comparison itself remains, of course, valid and useful. It is especially within the Enoch traditions that we find this extensive concern. On that very page, it should be noted that Gruenwald remarks the closeness between language in 1 Enoch 93:11-12 and Hekhalot Zutreti.

100. For other sources containing such material outside of the Talmudic and rabbinic tradition, see I. GRUENWALD, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden, 1980) 49, n. 72.

101. I. GRUENWALD, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden, 1980) 49.

fully-separated Christianity, as Schäfer would have it, one should see the text of the Bavli as a Diasporic text, as תלמודה של בבל, a rich stew in which memories and traditions of ancient Palestinian Jewry (Second Temple) are merged with later Jewish religious developments, stirred with a good portion of Iranian culture and more than a *soupçon* of Christian imaginings and served up hot. Ignoring any one of the ingredients of the text-scape will leave the dish tasting rather flat indeed.

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